

## THE SINISTER COUSIN

By William Almon Wolf

## A Study in the Inevitable, With "One Can't Choose One's Relatives" for Its Central theme.

was amused; her mother, turning to her for support, saw that, and was angrier than ever. As for John Worcester. he was pursued. He was prepared to be comtrite, but he had not yet discovered the exact cyclone blows up. His store of energy was not great enough to enable him to meet oppo sition at home as he did in his office.

aid in a deprecatory tone. "After all, you know, it's not my fault that these people are

They are your cousins," said Mrs. Worcester. "And they're impossible abso lately impossible common! I should never ome here if I had known!"

He tried to make something of that. He felt he was being stupid. But he kept on he knew, his position was sound. A man couldn't select his relatives. The thing was done for him. And they were very distant na. He hadn't seen or heard or thought

Then why did you have to remembe m now? his wife asked.

e-of the place reminded me, I suppose. ey always lived here. Had bad luck-, illness, lost money all that-

Mrs. Worcester looked at Anne, and, for the first time met sympathetic eves. But Anne looked as though she thought it hopeto try to make her father understand.

Well, we're in for it!" said Mrs. Worce "We've bought the place. John, can't t to have nice people for our friends pose they knew these Frances are our cousins? This is the most exclusive place they'd have nothing to do with us-

John Worcester smook his head doggedly "Lot of mobs." he said decirevely.

Not at all His wife pounced on the place like-this. Their young people grow with a certain pride. Anne might be ying at times because of the perversity of her sense of humor. But she was eate and

Thank you, mother," she said sweetly. We can't recognize these people." Mrs. pursued her own theme; gave her ds finality. "John, you've forgotten them may not Montify you. If the thing is

what to expect. His wife was going to try to make him take-up-golf. And he was gries these. He mount to assert hissail for

with her mother. "But it may work out all right. Poor Dad can't understand, of Rat think of turning up cousing the that to Repelair of all places?

a comfort. Mrs. Worcester felt when she looked at her. She could ably would before long, it was contain to be with a thoroughly eligible men. She would attract the young ra-of him, streep and goats, eligi and otherwise. She was small and alim Betrher allemans was a rounded one. Her placion was wonderful; art may have belood St. but mature bad done much for th.

tel. But she was certainly pretty. Her nose, a small, round, impertinent affair --- wer her mouth matched it perfectly Har eyes were lovely, deep brown, and very big. Her skin was fair; save for her brown

eyes and hair her coloring was light

"He's got to be," said Anne. "And he is shout some things. After all-

She-looked about the great hall of the new decorators had not quite finished with it. Period furniture was being arranged; the ince represented a great deal of money

"Note a dear." said Anne. " And he's made an aurist lot-of money these inst few years mit he? Heavens, when I think of how I wond to cry because other little girls always

father's a wonderful business man. But he never seems to worry. I don't think be takes the Bolsheviki sectorally enough. I amply don't know what we're going to do

They both went to find the represen of the interior decorator who had done the house. Rencialr represented a great change for the Worcesters. Everything was now-



Anne's father blinked when he sew me and looked so If he might try to run enony

d didn't look M. Things they had bought week ago looked like family belriooms were. Heirlooms of some other in at course, but that needs't be ex-

other places; Mrs. Worcester might have en any one of balf a dozen. Reaclair selected because Mrs. Worcester know Mrs. Martin Foster, who was of Rencisir's Nect-no smalls thing. And some relative of Mrs. Foster's bed wanted to sell this place

wtein. A Gothic railway station surrounded by flower beds. Chib cars on the comober; a school. Garages. A magnificent country club, with a championship golf

of the railway tracks that had cost less than thirty thousand dollars to build. Half a dozen millionaires, perhaps more, since the war, bad show places; there were any number of men who spoke soulfully about income surtaxes and excess profits levies. There were no factories; perish the thought! Few dwellers in Renciair had to struggle along on incomes running to less than five figures. But there were a few. Low persons who drove cabe and delivered ice and otherwise ministered to the elect. And the Frances, of

Mrs. Worcester couldn't see why, after for getting them so long, he had had to remem ber them at all. Yet the thing was relatively simple. It was the name, Renciair, that had stimulated his memory. When it was first mentioned he hadn't really taken it in. He there; he left that sort of thing to his wife. She told him, undoubtedly, and there was a time when he had to sign papers and checks But when he actually began living in the ince he learned its name; grew used to see ing it on his commutation ticket, perhaps

"I've got come countre here people called her son. We ought to look them up."

His wife was rather awed. That John

should actually have cousins here-struck her as verging on the miraculous. It was like finding money in the pockets of an old sarment. But something, some sixth sense, led her to make inquiries before she said any These people lived in a ramshackie old house south of the railway. Even Renciair, as has been intimated, had to have its bit of the proletariat: the institution appears to be indispensable. But Mrs. Worcester felt it unfair that a cousin of her husband's should belong to it. And the male cousin did: ghastly as the discovery was, she understood that he drove one of the station cabs.

Mrs. Worcester was not particularly a snob. She was simply a realist. She moved

ir for a definite reason; she had an bject. Kinship with these Frasers, publiely acknowledged, would leason ber chance to achieve that object. Rencials, if you please, was snobbieh could Mrs. Worcester

She wasn't setting out consciously upon a matrimonial campaign. But well is it need ful to-go into detail? Anne had danced with men, flirted with them, played with them, thought about them. She had been thing was done with subtlety and skill. She training pointed to a certain way of making

toward claiming kinship. And the Worces ters did well in Renciair. Mrs. Foster belond Formalities at the club were pleasantly out of the way. John Worcester might have played as much golf as he pleased; did, in But Anne developed her game; took lessons from Sandy Duncan, the club professional And she and her mother adorned the places

June saw Mrs. Worcester well pleased The male youth of Renclair was as excited about Anne as could have been wished. A several young men were as willing as the late Mr. Barkis. Excellent chaps, all of them; sheep, emphatically, not goats. Wayne Foster, Jimmy Wilde, Fred Morgan, Archer Graham-these seemed to be in the lend

Anne turned up for her lesson one morning and old Sandy Imped out from his shop to meet her. It was rheumatism, he explained He attributed his trouble about equally to the dampness and to prohibition. But he begged Anne not to fash berself, which she had no intention of doing in any case, and indicated a substitute a young man diffident in appearance and, seemingly, embarrassed

Donald wull gae aroun' wi' ye, miss, mid-Sandy. Donald, it appeared, while being young, still had much to learn about the mane, had sound views. The old Scot was loguacious; most of his race are, despite our rent fallacies to the contrary. So she knew good deal about Donald before she teed eye first as a eaddy, had gone to war, and, having dropped in to see Sandy, was, just by on available to save a young lady, her self, from disappointment.

But it was what she knew without word or hint from Sandy that counted. Anne nearly died. For she knew the rest of Don ald's name Frager! This was the malto her; not for worlds would she have made an excuse and escaped. Moreover, to do that would have involved hurting Donald. and Anne was not that sort. She regarded him rather furtively; nodded to herself in a surprised fashion. She liked him; made that the standards she applied to boys like Wayne Foster. That was what surprised her.

looked like any other presentable young man Chothes? White framels, soft shirt, good, stout shoes, plain the everything all night there. Face? Inclined to be suppore as to jaw and forehead. She liked his eyes even if they were blue, and consequently was big, but suited him. He was a big chap. might have played football or rowed on a crew if he hadn't been a poor relation unable

They were excellent hands and Anne had a way of indering people by their hands Good, solid, big fingers, but not blunt. Sup ple wrists of course. His golf implied that Fraser cousins as common didn't go with a boy like this. Anne had never quite liked it sayway. This is rather complicated. But these were her father's cousing and Anne was related to her father, while her mother was only married to him. Things like that

The male cousin didn't play. He watched Anne's swing; nodded; bad little to say until she tried her midiron. The way she handled "It's not an Indian club?" he protested.

Shorten your swing! Surely Sandy-" "O, I know," she said. "But I've never

seen why. I want strength." "You've got to sweep under your ball and carry through with it. Remember it's not

He dropped another ball; his tone was per emptory. It continued to be so. He didn't make suggestions; he gave commands. Anne found herself obeying him, too. And she got a four at the eleventh hole, against the str that had been eminently satisfactory there

"You really do know a lot about the game " she said. "But you're not a regular professional?"

"No," he said. "I'm not anything just now. I've been driving one of the station cabs, but I quit. No-I just dropped in to see old Sandy this morning."

That was the first time she had noticed has voice at all consciously. It must have had its effect, though, in forming that favorable first impression she had of him. Common Not with that voice! And she liked the way he talked, too; his choice of words. Blee was really grateful when the lesson was over

"You've taught me a lot." she said. "I suppose Sandy's tried to tell me the same things, and I've been stupid. But, anywey I've learned them now."

"I'm glad, Miss Worcester," he said. She wondered, impishly, whether he knew Words were on the tip of her tongue; she la:

Sandy and she would probably have to put up with Donald for two or three days. As for him, he didn't know when he'd be about If it was the week end, now, there were two or three members still had something in their lockers. But until then, between the damp ness and the drought-well, they'd never made him think that that war was a good

Anne was still chuckling to herself when she went home. In the beginning she meent to tell her mother, because it was so funny But she changed her mind. She couldn't to pend on her mother's sense of humor, she would probably forbid more lessons from the male cousts. And Anne wanted them; be put it all over old Sandy as a teacher, she thought. What her mother didn't know

That remained to be seen. There were factors for which Anne didn't allow. The male youth of Rencisir, heretofore mea tioned was still about. Appe had a good deal of what pleasant old ladies call atter others not so lighted; kisses, once in a while This story is not Victorian, and & has to recognize some of the prevalent kisses be tween young people who aren't engaged and don't particularly want to be to one another

Something had to be settled. Anne knew that. She didn't intend to become one of those girls who are just kissed.

There is too much emphasis, it appears. upon this matter of kieses. Actually, there weren't so many, just enough to make Anne rather thoughtful. After all, kissing a young man, or being kissed by him, or both, is or are a way or ways of discovering the advicability of further proceedings culminating in arrangements with florists and organists. You perfectly nice girl and all?

Well then this was what troubled Anne Being kissed by Wayne Foster was so much like being kissed by Jimmy Wilde or Archer Graham. Consider the kisses as symbols man whose kisses pleased her no more than those of three or four other young men. It struck her as tame. She had an idea tha there was a way of kissing and being kissed that was as yet beyond her experience.

Anne, you will observe, was making prog ress. She was doing some original thinking upon matters obscure and profound. She was using neither the phrases nor the mental processes of Freud or Bernard Shaw or any of the other philosophic thinkers about love but she was digging, in her own way and in her own sort of soil, for the same truth. Her methods were strictly empirical. But the fact that she thought about them afterward She wondered one day, out of a clear sky

at it were, what it would be like to be kissed by a male coumin.

That affair had been going on in the most without discussion or arrangement, supplanted Sandy as her teacher; the two of them had some understanding, she supposed All she knew was that she continued to pay Sandy: rather, that her father did when be settled his house account. The male consider just continued to turn up every day after Sandy was perfectly well

The lessons were pretty perfunctory now what they really did was to play sightees holes together. He gave her some advice Fut she headed the woman's handicap list now and was quite good enough for tourns ments had she cared to enter them. They talked about golf, of course, in the main, put there were other topics. She asked him about the war. He had been in aviation. Present be admitted that he land got across. Yes he'd brought down a Boche, be tought Later, having investigated, she accused him that sort of thing was all rot-whether you And she'd better watch that left shouldof here on her drive. She was getting care less. He was severe about her form the

curious, speculative way. And about one minute later ceased wondering. She knew

She knew many things. That, when a had suspected that it was possible to be kissed with results aptirely different from those achieved by the Mesers. Foster, Wilde. Morgan, Graham, etc., etc., she had been per feetly right. For when the male cousis kissed one, one lost one's breath and one's him and kissed him back, and couldn't be

"Don!" she said, and sank down on the turf, shaken and scared. Only to be caught up and kissed again. Sweetheart, he onlied er: silly things like that. And she loved him and everything be said and did.

"You Q, Don you're my cousin sort of

She was awfully frightened when she had said that. And the way he nodded didn't resenure ber. "You'll hate me. I'm such a beautly-little mob."

But he didn't hate her at all; wasn't going to hate her. And he'd always known the were cousins. He laughed about it. And about the way she and her mother had felt She didn't wonder until later how he knew

They didn't really talk, you know; it would be ridiculous to try to set down what they said. Neither lot the other finish a sentence But they communicated some things. He mother would be difficult. He didn't care But her father was a dear. He wasn't to to worry about, now! He was a poor rela then-but in the extremely near future h wagn't going to be so darned poor at that He thought they might go and tell her mothe

But then she asserted herself. It was about time. He had been in control to a dangerous extent up to then. But she must decide about teiling her mother. Couldn't he see that? He yielded the point. But he had to see her that evening. She said that could be managed; she'd get away and most wise woman. She could advise them. And wanted to meet his mother, of course

So, ultimately, they parted and she wont calling that afternoon. Mrs. Worcester had no suspicions; she just commented on how particularly well Anne looked and purred

simple. Young men were always dropping around when Anne was sitting alone on the pizzza, and carrying her off. So she just went, and he was waiting for her. mother if she missed her at all, probably thought she was motoring or sitting in the garden. And all the time she was walking down toward the low quarter of Renciair her complete satisfaction. She was making further discoveries about being kissed by the male cousin. It was not only different from having any other young man do it; it was different every time be did it. And shhadn't dared to hope for anything so thrilling

She loved his mother. Mrs. Fraser knes. all about everything, and took Appe into per arms and kissed her and laughed a great eni and wouldn't listen to any apologies

'My dear of course, I understand," she said. "I know I'll like your mother. And your father's a door. I've always liked him. "I suppose he's changed since you knew

"He hasn't changed so very much," said

Your father's a traitor, sweetheart," said Sneaking down here and getting mother to make old fashioned strawberry shortcake for

"My dad!" Anne collapsed. "The old wretch! But what you must have thought A

mother and me." "Not a bit of ft." said Don. "We're not proud even if we

"Don!" Mrs. Fraser checked him. Sh-"What is it? You've got to tell me!" mid

her yet the way I do." He did say that; he really did. "She'll love R."

"I'll kill you if you don't hurry and tell "I can't hurry It's too complicated. De you know how we're related? It's like this

My mother's grandfather disappeared after [Continued on following page.]